



*Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors*  
*Supervisor Khalif Rainey, District 2*  
*Supervisor Russell Stamper II, District 5*

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**SUPERVISORS KHALIF RAINEY AND RUSSELL STAMPER II WARN AGAINST  
CO-SLEEPING WITH INFANTS BUT CRITICIZE CALLS FOR CRIMINALIZATION**

Milwaukee County Supervisors Khalif Rainey and Russell Stamper II today warned parents and relatives of infants against co-sleeping with babies, but they said calls to criminalize it in cases where an infant dies are “harsh and cruel”.

“There is no question that co-sleeping can be dangerous,” said Stamper, a member of the County Board’s Health and Human Needs Committee. “I think co-sleeping should be discouraged through an effective and continual education program about its dangers, but we need to look more broadly at the issue of infant mortality overall. The infant mortality rate in Milwaukee County is unacceptably high, especially in the African American community, and that is the issue we should all be focused on.

“But criminalizing a grieving parent or relative for co-sleeping which results in the death of an infant is harsh and cruel. Instead of focusing our efforts on criminalization, we should be looking into the real problems of infant mortality and work to reduce and prevent it.”

Rainey said that infant deaths are often related to a number of factors, including unsafe sleeping environments, premature births and birth defects. He said that the community should be focused on reducing and preventing those risk factors. Rainey added that he agreed with the City of Milwaukee Health Department position on infant mortality due to co-sleeping.

“As the Health Department states, existing Wisconsin laws surrounding child abuse and/or neglect provide ample authority for our justice officials to pursue criminal charges,” Rainey said. “I am confident that the District Attorney’s office pays very close attention to infant deaths and would move forward with charges when appropriate.”

Rainey added that prosecution of parents and relatives whose child dies in a co-sleeping or an unsafe sleeping environment could prevent the Medical Examiner from investigating and understanding the reasons for the death.

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